

Atlanta Regional Office, as the "Senator Johnny Isakson Department of Veterans Affairs Atlanta Regional Office."

Throughout his career, Senator Isakson was a passionate advocate for veterans in Georgia and across the country. Senator Isakson served in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972. Throughout his political career he found common ground across the aisle in order to achieve progress, all the while governing with compassion. As a longtime member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs he worked to serve veterans and increase accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs. As Chairman of the committee, he championed VA reforms that culminated in the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020.

We believe that naming the VA Atlanta Regional Office after Senator Isakson, a dedicated advocate and public servant, will honor his legacy and inspire future generations of Georgians.

Sincerely,

SADIE HILL,
Commander.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, June 15, 2022.

Hon. JON TESTER,
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Washington, DC.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Washington, DC.

Hon. JERRY MORAN,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BOST,
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN TESTER, RANKING MEMBER MORAN, CHAIRMAN TAKANO, AND RANKING MEMBER BOST: As members of the Georgia congressional delegation, we write to request your support for legislation to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Atlanta Regional Office the, "Senator Johnny Isakson Department of Veterans Affairs Atlanta Regional Office."

Senator Johnny Isakson served veterans, the state of Georgia, and the United States throughout his life. A native of Atlanta and a graduate of the University of Georgia, Senator Isakson served in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972. Following a successful business career, he served in the Georgia General Assembly and Georgia State Senate for nearly two decades, served as Chairman of the State Board of Education, and was elected to the United States House of Representatives.

In 2004, Senator Isakson was elected to the United States Senate. During his fifteen years in the chamber, he earned a reputation for courtesy, dignity, and kindness, building relationships across the aisle for the good of the country. Eventually, Senator Isakson rose to Chair the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, a role in which he championed important reforms to improve the quality and accessibility of services for our nation's military veterans.

We believe that Senator Isakson's service to the veterans of Georgia warrants this tremendous recognition, and that naming this facility is a fitting tribute to his legacy. Accordingly, we respectfully request the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees' consideration and support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Jon Ossoff, Sanford Bishop, Austin Scott, Buddy Carter, David Scott, Andrew Clyde, Raphael Warnock, Lucy McBath, Barry Loudermilk, Hank Johnson, Nikema Williams, Carolyn Bordeaux, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Rick Allen, Jody Hice, Drew Ferguson, Members of Congress.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 4359, a bill to designate the VA regional office in Atlanta as the Senator Johnny Isakson Department of Veterans Affairs Atlanta Regional Office.

Senator Isakson served over 45 years as a public servant. He retired in 2019 as the longest-serving Republican Senator from the great State of Georgia.

Senator Isakson is remembered for his contributions to the veteran community and to his home State.

His successful career of public service began when he joined the Georgia Air National Guard. After separating from the National Guard, he brought this invaluable experience to the Georgia General Assembly and to the U.S. Congress.

Senator Isakson was a dedicated advocate for our Nation's veterans, serving as chairman for the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for three Congresses.

Under his chairmanship, our friends on the Senate VA Committee spearheaded the enactment of critical legislation such as the VA Mission Act, the Forever GI Bill, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, and the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

Senator Isakson is remembered fondly by his colleagues as the embodiment of compassionate servant leadership. He had a reputation as a bipartisan Member who was willing to reach across the aisle for the good of his constituents. I can think of no better way to honor Senator Isakson's legacy to both the citizens of Georgia and the veteran community than by naming the Atlanta regional office after him.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP) who serves as subcommittee chair on the Appropriations Committee and also as a former member of the House of Representatives House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I am honored to speak in support of S. 4359 to rename the VA's Atlantic regional office after a good and great man, the late Senator Johnny Isakson.

This is a companion bill to one that I introduced in the House with my colleague across the aisle, Congressman RICK ALLEN, and which the entire Georgia congressional delegation cosponsored.

A son of Georgia, Johnny Isakson was born in Atlanta and graduated from the University of Georgia. He was first a businessman and then a public servant.

I served with him in the Georgia General Assembly and then in the United States Congress where he served as a Congressman and as a U.S. Senator.

We stood side by side in support of Georgia's military bases, families, and veterans. Together we worked on many projects to improve the lives of Georgians and Americans.

During his many years as a public servant and as the chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he worked tirelessly on behalf of the Nation's most deserving citizens: our military veterans.

It is fitting that we are taking up consideration of this bill just as we conclude commemorating Veterans Day. One of the fundamental ways Congress can demonstrate its thanks to our veterans is to provide the care they have earned and deserved.

Renaming the VA facility in Atlanta after Senator Isakson is a fitting recognition of his service to our country and his lifelong work ensuring Congress upholds America's commitment to its veterans. I am proud to call Johnny a friend, and I know he continues to look down on us. I hope that we are inspired by his example to always give our best to our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to honor Johnny Isakson's legacy of service.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I encourage my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, again, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing S. 4359, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 4359.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1530

VA INFRASTRUCTURE POWERS EXCEPTIONAL RESEARCH ACT OF 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5721) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve research conducted within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5721

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021” or the “VIPER Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. INAPPLICABILITY OF PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 120. Inapplicability of Paperwork Reduction Act

“Subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as the ‘Paperwork Reduction Act’) shall not apply to research activities of the Department, including activities under subchapter V of chapter 73.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“120. Inapplicability of Paperwork Reduction Act.”.

SEC. 3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

(a) OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.—Chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subchapter:

“SUBCHAPTER V—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**“§ 7381. Office of Research and Development**

“(a) OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.—There is in the Veterans Health Administration an Office of Research and Development (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’).

“(b) PURPOSES.—The function of the Office is to serve veterans through a full spectrum of research (including pre-clinical, clinical, and health systems science), technology transfer, and application.

“(c) CHIEF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER.—The head of the Office is the Chief Research and Development Officer.

“(d) ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL.—The Office shall be organized in such manner, and its personnel shall perform such duties and have such titles, as the Secretary may prescribe.

“§ 7382. Research personnel

“(a) WAIVER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL PERSONNEL ACT MOBILITY PROGRAM LIMITS.—The Secretary may waive the limit on the period and number of assignments required under section 3372(a) of title 5 with respect to an individual who performs research for the Department under the mobility program under subchapter VI of chapter 33 of such title (commonly referred to as the ‘Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program’).

“(b) OUTSIDE EARNED INCOME FOR RESEARCH FOR THE DEPARTMENT.—(1) Compensation from a nonprofit corporation established under subchapter IV of this chapter, or a university affiliated with the Department, may be paid, without regard to section 209 of title 18, to an employee described in paragraph (2), for research conducted pursuant to section 7303 of this title if—

“(A) the research has been approved in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Under Secretary for Health;

“(B) the employee conducts research under the supervision of personnel of the Department; and

“(C) the Secretary agreed to the terms of such compensation in writing.

“(2) An employee described in this subsection is an employee who has an appointment within the Department, whether with or without compensation, and without regard to the source of such compensation.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SUBCHAPTER V—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

“7381. Office of Research and Development.
“7382. Research personnel.”.

SEC. 4. EXPANSION OF HIRING AUTHORITIES FOR CERTAIN CLASSES OF RESEARCH OCCUPATIONS.

Section 7401(3) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting “statisticians, economists, informaticists, data scientists, and” after “blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ELLZEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5721, as amended.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5721, as amended, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021, or VIPER Act, as amended, which I introduced with Ranking Member BOST.

This bipartisan bill was developed in consultation with scientific groups and veteran service organizations. It gives VA the additional authorities it needs to make its world-class research program even more efficient and innovative as it works to improve the lives of the veterans it serves.

It is no secret that VA research is a jewel in VA’s crown, and we need to ensure that VA can continue to be competitive in hiring the finest scientists to understand, prevent, and treat health challenges veterans face from the effects of military toxic exposures and chronic pain to post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

VA has told us and our Senate colleagues that it urgently needs the VIPER Act, especially to protect the nonprofit veterans research and education foundations so critical to the VA research enterprise.

VIPER is also endorsed by major VSOs, including The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Minority Veterans of America, Modern Military Association of America, and Wounded Warrior Project.

It has the strong endorsement of scientific organizations that support the VA research program, including the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, America Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Heart Association, America Psychiatric Association, American Physiological Association, American Thoracic Society, Association of American Medical Colleges, Association of VA Psychologist Leaders, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biol-

ogy, National Association of Veterans’ Research and Education Foundations, Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs, and Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD letters from four of these organizations.

FRIENDS OF VA MEDICAL CARE
AND HEALTH RESEARCH,

November 5, 2021.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,

Chair, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs,

House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BOST,

Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN TAKANO AND RANKING MEMBER BOST: As members of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) executive committee, we write to thank you for your legislation, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021, or VIPER Act. The organizations represented by the FOVA executive committee are pleased to endorse this bill, which would provide added authority and resources to improve the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program.

FOVA is a coalition founded over 30 years ago to ensure that America’s veterans receive high-quality health care supported by veteran-centric research conducted through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 100 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. FOVA works in concert with the Independent Budget veterans service organizations.

We are pleased that Congress has worked over the last several years in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to support robust funding growth for VA research. Specifically, your legislation would add stability and efficiency for the VA research program by formally authorizing VA’s Office of Research and Development and excluding VA research from Paperwork Reduction Act requirements, better aligning VA with other federal research agencies. We also appreciate that the VIPER Act would work to enhance the diversity of the VA research workforce, increasing scientific opportunities and leading to improved health care for veterans.

While the VIPER Act takes important steps to strengthen the research program, additional infrastructure support for information technology and physical laboratory improvements continue to be necessary to ensure that VA researchers have access to the cutting-edge technology that yields state-of-the-art research and improved health outcomes. We understand that you remain abreast of these issues, and we stand ready to support any additional efforts you may undertake to address these important research needs.

Thank you again for your efforts. We look forward to working with you to continue this important work.

Sincerely,

THE FOVA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

ASSOCIATION OF
VA PSYCHOLOGIST LEADERS,

November 10, 2022.

The Association of VA Psychologist Leaders fully endorses H.R. 5721: To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve research conducted within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. We believe this will bring needed parity of private and public universities funding VA Researchers. Many important discoveries in health

care originated from VA research. If VA researchers are blocked from being compensated for their work, we will deprive Veterans and the broader American population of new advancements in healthcare. Further, limiting VA's research enterprise will diminish the its attractiveness to professional trainees and cause current staff to leave VA service.

We appreciate Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost for introducing this bill and we would like to offer our endorsement and support.

Sincerely,

MIKE MARTIN, PhD,
President, Association of
VA Psychologist Leaders.

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR
SUICIDE PREVENTION,
November 11, 2022.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,
Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BOST,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN TAKANO AND RANKING MEMBER BOST: On behalf of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), I am pleased to write in support of H.R. 5721, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research (VIPER) Act of 2021. As you know, this important legislation will provide the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with new authorities to facilitate research on Veterans' health outcomes, leading to better care for our nation's Veterans and service members.

Suicide is an ongoing public health crisis in the United States. The national suicide rate increased by 4% in 2021, reversing progress made in 2019 and 2020. Since the year 2000, the national suicide rate has increased by 30%, and suicide remains a leading cause of death in the United States. This crisis is tragically prevalent among Veterans, who face a significantly higher risk of suicide than their civilian counterparts. In 2020, 6,146 Veterans died by suicide, at a rate 57.3% higher than that of non-Veteran U.S. adults.

The VIPER Act will allow the VA to grow its research program, encourage more innovation and collaboration, and support the recruitment and retention of data scientists and researchers. By providing the VA with the research tools and resources it needs, the VIPER Act will improve the lives of Veterans and service members and help to prevent suicide among these populations.

We thank you for your ongoing leadership in support of Veterans and service members, and we urge the swift passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

LAUREL STINE, J.D., M.A.,
Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2022.

Hon. MARK TAKANO,
Chair, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JON TESTER,
Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BOST,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JERRY MORAN,
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIR TAKANO, RANKING MEMBER BOST, CHAIR TESTER, AND RANKING MEMBER MORAN: Thank you for your continued sup-

port of medical research addressing the health of America's veterans. We write respectfully to urge Congress to enact as soon as possible a bipartisan veterans bill that includes provisions from HR 5721, the VIPER Act that will allow research affiliations between nonprofit medical schools and Veterans' Affairs (VA) medical centers to continue without disruption. The VA recently issued guidance that prohibits VA employees involved in VA research from receiving compensation from outside sources, including a VA-affiliated Nonprofit Education and Research Corporation or an affiliated nonprofit medical school. This policy will be highly disruptive to thousands of research projects focused on improving veterans' health and led by VA scientists who hold joint appointments with nonprofit medical schools. A limited exception to allow outside compensation for VA researchers (enclosure) would provide stability for these important projects.

Across the country, VA medical centers are affiliated with nonprofit as well as public medical schools for the purpose of improving the quality of veterans' health care, to support medical education, and to foster medical research on conditions affecting veterans. Projects conducted at VA medical centers in partnership with medical schools are advancing new therapies and treatments for a wide range of health challenges, including cancer, diabetes, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and chronic pain. The importance of these affiliations was recently highlighted in a May statement for the record to your committees by the Association of American Medical Colleges, including a recommendation of swift passage of the VIPER Act.

These very productive affiliations between VA medical centers and medical schools are built around joint faculty appointments, in which faculty based at the VA often derive part of their salary from the academic institution, often through research grants from the National Institutes of Health or other sponsors. However, in January 2022, the VA General Counsel issued guidance, based on advice from the Department of Justice, stating that current federal law (18 USC 209) bars VA researchers from deriving any part of their research compensation from non-federal sources. If the new guidance were to take effect, VA-affiliated researchers across the country would be required to forego external sources of support (and thus take a cut in salary), curtail externally-funded research (including federally-funded projects), or attempt to relocate their clinical research sites from the VA to facilities on medical school campuses (which may not be possible in many cases due to space and logistical constraints). This has the potential to interrupt hundreds of millions of dollars invested in life-saving biomedical research for America's veterans.

The VA is trying to avoid a disruption of the medical research conducted at VA medical centers, but a full resolution requires legislation. We ask that you and your colleagues work quickly to pass a bipartisan veterans' legislative package that includes the relevant provisions of HR 5721 that will allow VA employees to receive outside compensation related to their clinical and research activities at VA medical centers. We are grateful for your attention to this issue and for your support of university research that benefits our veterans. We would be happy to discuss this further at your convenience or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Paul Klotman, MD; President & CEO; Executive Dean, Baylor College of Medicine.

Karen H. Antman, MD; Provost, Boston University Medical Campus; Dean, Boston University School of Medicine.

Mukesh K. Jain, MD, FAHA; Dean of Medicine and Biological Sciences; The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Stanton L. Gerson, MD; Dean, School of Medicine and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs; Case Western Reserve University.

Katrina Armstrong, MD; Executive Vice President for Health and Biomedical Sciences; Dean of the Faculties of Health Sciences and the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons; Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Duane A. Compton, PhD; Dean, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth.

Mary E. Klotman, MD; R.J. Reynolds Distinguished Professor of Medicine; Dean, Duke University School of Medicine; Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, Duke University; Chief Academic Officer, Duke University Health System.

Vikas P. Sukhatme, MD, ScD; Dean, Emory School of Medicine; Chief Academic Officer, Emory Healthcare.

Barbara Lee Bass, MD, FACS; Professor of Surgery and Dean; School of Medicine and Health Sciences; George Washington University.

George Q. Daley, MD, PhD; Dean of the Faculty of Medicine; Harvard University.

Joseph E. Kerschner, MD; Provost and Executive Vice President; The Julia A. Uihlein, MA, Dean of the School of Medicine; Professor of Otolaryngology; Microbiology and Immunology; Medical College of Wisconsin.

Eric G. Neilson, MD, MACP, FASN; Vice President for Medical Affairs; Lewis Landsberg Dean; Professor of Medicine and Cell and Developmental Biology; Feinberg School of Medicine; Northwestern University.

Robert I. Grossman, MD; Dean, New York University Grossman School of Medicine; Chief Executive Officer, New York University Langone Health.

Lloyd B. Minor, M.D.; Carl and Elizabeth Naumann Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine; Professor of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery; Professor of Neurobiology and of Bioengineering, by courtesy.

Lee Hamm, MD; Senior Vice President & Dean of the School of Medicine; Tulane University.

Jerris R. Hedges, MD, MS, MMM; Professor & Dean; Barry & Virginia Weinman—Endowed Chair; John A. Burns School of Medicine; University of Hawaii—Manoa.

Mark T. Gladwin, MD; Vice President for Medical Affairs, UM Baltimore; John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and; Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Henri R. Ford, MD, MHA; Dean and Chief Academic Officer; University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD; Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania for the Health System; Dean, Perelman School of Medicine.

Nancy J. Brown, MD; Jean and David W. Wallace Dean; C.N.H. Long Professor of Internal Medicine; Yale School of Medicine.

Enclosure.

RECOMMENDED LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE TO ALLOW OUTSIDE COMPENSATION IN LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO RESEARCH (FROM HR 5721)

(a) Office of Research and Development.—Chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subchapter:

“SUBCHAPTER V—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
“§ 7381. Office of Research and Development

“(a) Office of Research and Development.—There is in the Veterans Health Administration an Office of Research and Development (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’).

“(b) Purposes.—The function of the Office is to serve veterans through a full spectrum of research (including pre-clinical, clinical, and health systems science), technology transfer, and application.

“(c) Chief Research and Development Officer.—The head of the Office is the Chief Research and Development Officer.

“(d) Organization and personnel.—The Office shall be organized in such manner, and its personnel shall perform such duties and have such titles, as the Secretary may prescribe.

“§ 7382. Research personnel

“(a) Waiver of Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program limits.—The Secretary may waive the limit on the period and number of assignments required under section 3372(a) of title 5 with respect to an individual who performs research for the Department under the mobility program under subchapter VI of chapter 33 of such title (commonly referred to as the ‘Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program’).

“(b) Outside earned income for research for the Department.—(1) Compensation from a nonprofit corporation established under subchapter IV of this chapter, or a university affiliated with the Department, may be paid, without regard to section 209 of title 18, to an employee described in paragraph (2), for research conducted pursuant to section 7303 of this title if—

“(A) the research has been approved in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Under Secretary for Health;

“(B) the employee conducts research under the supervision of personnel of the Department; and

“(C) the Secretary agreed to the terms of such compensation in writing.

“(2) An employee described in this subsection is an employee who has an appointment within the Department, whether with or without compensation, and without regard to the source of such compensation.”

Mr. TAKANO. In one letter, deans from 20 medical schools note that without the legislative fix in VIPER, VA will have to “interrupt hundreds of millions of dollars invested in life-saving biomedical research for America’s veterans.”

Mr. Speaker, we must pass this bill, urge our Senate colleagues to pass it, and get it to the President by the end of the year to give VA the authorities it needs to fix its research program issues now.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5721, the VIPER Act, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5721, as amended, the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021, or the VIPER Act.

Ranking Member BOST is an original cosponsor of this bill alongside Chairman TAKANO.

Research is one of the core statutory missions of the VA healthcare system. VA researchers have made a number of important discoveries and advancements that have benefited not only veterans but the entire world.

Just recently, with the pandemic, VA researchers have done groundbreaking work utilizing vast stores of data to identify certain collateral health im-

pacts on vulnerable populations, and they have made notable advancements in studying the characteristics of and potential treatments for what is termed long COVID.

This bill will make it easier for VA to conduct the research that veterans require, and yield advancements in science and medicine that will benefit everyone.

The VIPER Act would codify VA’s Office of Research and Development.

VIPER would also better structure VA’s ability to conduct research across the system.

Finally, this bill will expand hiring authorities for certain classes of research occupations, including statisticians, economists, informaticists, and data scientists.

VA needs the talent of these occupational categories to keep up with rapid changes in data analytics, including artificial intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the bipartisan committee work that has been done to date on this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support it. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing this important piece of legislation, H.R. 5721, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5721, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

STRENGTHENING VA CYBERSECURITY ACT OF 2022

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7299) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to obtain an independent cybersecurity assessment of information systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7299

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Strengthening VA Cybersecurity Act of 2022” or the “SVAC Act of 2022”.

SEC. 2. INDEPENDENT CYBERSECURITY ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development center to provide to the Secretary an independent cybersecurity assessment of—

(A) five high-impact information systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) the effectiveness of the information security program and information security management system of the Department.

(2) DETAILED ANALYSIS.—The independent cybersecurity assessment provided under paragraph (1) shall include a detailed analysis of the ability of the Department—

(A) to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the information, information systems, and devices of the Department; and

(B) to protect against—

(i) advanced persistent cybersecurity threats;

(ii) ransomware;

(iii) denial of service attacks;

(iv) insider threats;

(v) threats from foreign actors, including state sponsored criminals and other foreign based criminals;

(vi) phishing;

(vii) credential theft;

(viii) cybersecurity attacks that target the supply chain of the Department;

(ix) threats due to remote access and telework activity; and

(x) other cyber threats.

(3) TYPES OF SYSTEMS.—The independent cybersecurity assessment provided under paragraph (1) shall cover on-premises, remote, cloud-based, and mobile information systems and devices used by, or in support of, Department activities.

(4) SHADOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.—The independent cybersecurity assessment provided under paragraph (1) shall include an evaluation of the use of information technology systems, devices, and services by employees and contractors of the Department who do so without the heads of the elements of the Department that are responsible for information technology at the Department knowing or approving of such use.

(5) METHODOLOGY.—In conducting the cybersecurity assessment to be provided under paragraph (1), the federally funded research and development center shall take into account industry best practices and the current state-of-the-art in cybersecurity evaluation and review.

(b) PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date on which an independent assessment is provided to the Secretary by a federally funded research and development center pursuant to an agreement entered into under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a plan to address the findings of the federally funded research and development center set forth in such assessment.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The plan submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) Improvements to the security controls of the information systems of the Department assessed under subsection (a) to—

(i) achieve the goals specified in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) of such subsection; and

(ii) protect against the threats specified in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph.

(B) Improvements to the information security program and information security management system of the Department to achieve such goals and protect against such threats.

(C) A cost estimate for implementing the plan.

(D) A timeline for implementing the plan.